

BACKGROUND

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Ministry of Advanced Education

GATHERING PLACES FUNDING – JANUARY 2008

Providing funding for gathering places is one of the ways government is working to close the higher learning education gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. Gathering places welcome Aboriginal students to campus. They also promote and preserve Aboriginal culture and history, and provide a resource for students and the community. They have a variety of uses, which can include meetings, ceremonies, study areas and places to socialize. Each gathering place is designed to reflect the cultural characteristics of the post-secondary institution's Aboriginal students, community and traditions.

1. Northern Lights College – \$600,000 – Fort Nelson, Fort St. John, Dawson Creek, Chetwynd

Northern Lights College will develop gathering places for Aboriginal students at its Chetwynd, Dawson Creek, Fort Nelson and Fort St. John campuses. Plans call for construction to create 72-square-metre gathering places that will feature artwork and cultural artifacts commissioned by local Aboriginal bands. They will contain private study spaces, a learning services kiosk and help desk, a presentation area and a utility kitchen. The rooms will use colours and textures that evoke the four elements (fire, water, earth and wind). The college's geographic area includes eight distinct Aboriginal cultures: Tlingit, Tahltan, Slavey, Cree, Saulteau, Dunneza, Dene and Métis.

2. Kwantlen University College – \$522,000 – Surrey

The region served by Kwantlen University College includes five First Nations; the institution is named after the Kwantlen First Nation of the Coast Salish Stó:lo people. Kwantlen plans to create a welcoming space for all Aboriginal students by renovating an underused classroom, hallway and two offices in its Surrey campus. A private entrance will open onto a forest, central courtyard and pond. Renovations will include lighting and window upgrades, new finishes and furnishings as well as ceremonial art installations. An independent mechanical system will be retrofitted so smudge ceremonies can take place without affecting other areas of the building.

3. College of the Rockies – \$450,000 – Cranbrook

The College of the Rockies in Cranbrook is within the traditional territory of the Ktunaxa Nation. The college plans to build an arbour similar to the Ktunaxa's more permanent traditional teepees. The structure, currently being planned, is expected to include a firepit that can seat up to 30 people. The gathering place will be suitable for ceremonial purposes and as a formal area for teaching and learning. It will also serve as a meeting place and as a focal point for the campus grounds.

4. College of New Caledonia – \$310,000 – Fort St. James

Aboriginal people are the College of New Caledonia's fastest-growing student group. At the college's Fort St. James campus, 65 per cent of students are First Nations. Most come from surrounding Aboriginal communities and First Nations, including the Nak'azdli Band, Takla Lake First Nation, Tl'azt'en Nation and Yekooche First Nation. The college will provide a café-style gathering place for them and other community members. It will contain a cooking area and will be close to the student lounge, resource centre and multi-station Internet lab.

5. Langara College – \$304,000 – Vancouver

Langara College is creating a space that celebrates Aboriginal culture in its new student union building. This area will include a public art display, featuring a sculpture or carving to welcome visitors to the traditional territories of the Coast Salish peoples, and instil pride in Aboriginal students attending or visiting the campus.

6. Okanagan College – \$253,000 – Salmon Arm

Okanagan College has already built student centres on its Kelowna, Penticton and Vernon campuses to serve Aboriginal students. This funding will be used to create a similar centre at the college's Salmon Arm campus, which has four First Nation communities within 50 kilometres, as well as urban Aboriginal and Métis populations. The cafeteria and lounge area at the campus will be extended, with glass doors between the two areas. This will create a gathering place for Aboriginal learners while allowing a larger space to be opened up for functions and events. The centre will include up-to-date computers to help Aboriginal students expand their knowledge and skills, study tables, work space for an Aboriginal mentor, Aboriginal art, comfortable furniture, and a small kitchen with a fridge, microwave and coffee maker.

ABORIGINAL POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION STRATEGY

As well as funding gathering places, the Aboriginal post-secondary education strategy includes:

- Reducing financial barriers through \$10.3 million in scholarships for Aboriginal students.
- Increasing access, retention and success by investing \$14.9 million to create three-year service plans between public post-secondary institutions and Aboriginal communities that identify interests and education needs of Aboriginal students and create relevant programs.
- Providing over \$12.1 million for programs designed, with the help of First Nations, to be culturally appropriate in content and delivery.
- Investing \$12.8 million in encouraging more students to go on from high school to post-secondary programs in fields like health, social work and business.

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